The Ethiopian National Project (ENP)

Summary Report

The TIUD Project:
Documenting Ethiopian Jewry and Its Journey to Israel

November 2023

Heshvan 5784

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**“I got to know more about my community. I now understand what my family went through, which has made me look up to them more”**

**The Ethiopian National Project (ENP)** is a collaborative effort involving the Jewish Federations of North America, the Israeli Government, representatives of the Ethiopian community organizations in Israel, JDC Israel, the Jewish Agency, and Keren Hayesod - United Israel Appeal.

**The TIUD Project: Documenting Ethiopian Jewry and Its Journey to Israel**, is one of the supplementary programs offered to 10th-grade students as part of the ENP. Its main goal is to raise awareness of the story of the Ethiopian Aliyah, commemorate it, and bring it to the public in the form of a documentary book. The project is generously funded by the **Richard and Rosalee C Davison Foundation** and the **Ben and Zelda Cohen Charitable Foundation**.

The research was commissioned and funded by the ENP and conducted by Mashav Applied Research with the guidance of the Evaluation Unit at the Branco Weiss Institute, which operates the project.

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# Background

1. **The Ethiopian** **National Project and the TIUD Project**

The Ethiopian National Project (ENP)[[1]](#footnote-1) began its activities following a government decision in 2001, based on the desire to address the barriers hindering the full and successful integration of Ethiopian immigrants and their children into Israeli society. The ENP’s goal is to increase the social mobility opportunities for members of the Ethiopian community. As part of this initiative, high school students receive educational support, enrichment, and activities aimed at social empowerment.

The TIUD Project: Documenting Ethiopian Jewry and its Journey to Israel, is one of the supplementary programs offered as part of the ENP. The project is an annual initiative delivered to 10th-grade students, which began its activities in the 2018-2019 academic year on a nationwide scale. The project is generously funded by the Richard and Rosalee C Davison Foundation and the Ben and Zelda Cohen Charitable Foundation and is operated by the Branco Weiss Institute.

The main objectives defined for the project are to raise awareness of the story of Ethiopian Aliyah and bring it to the public in the form of a documentary book that preserves the heritage of Ethiopian Jewry and commemorates the personal stories of the older generation of immigrants. Additional objectives include (a) increasing participants' sense of belonging and pride; (b) deepening the intergenerational relationship between students and their families by fostering an understanding of the history, culture, and heritage of Ethiopian Jewry among project participants; and (c) enhancing the students' literacy competence by strengthening their writing skills.

One of the foundational concepts underlying the project is the recognition that many of the Ethiopian community's immigration stories have not been documented in writing, and doing so will enable them to be preserved and disseminated to the wider public. Therefore, the slogan accompanying the project is based on an Ethiopian proverb that states, “What is spoken will be forgotten, what is written will remain forever” በቃል የተያዘ ይረሳል በጽሁፍ ያለ ይዎረሳል.

The Ethiopian Jewish community, also known as the Beta Israel community, consists of approximately 164,400 members. Of these, around 90,600 were born in Ethiopia and 73,800 were born in Israel to Ethiopian fathers (based on data from the Central Bureau of Statistics).

1. **The Course of the TIUD Project**

In the 2022-2023 academic year, the TIUD Project operated in ten cities (Kiryat Yam, Afula, Pardes Hanna, Hadera, Netanya, Petah Tikva, Ramla, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Be'er Sheva). Participants included 206 high school students, of whom 23 were not members of the Ethiopian community.

As part of the project, students were divided into groups of 10-15, and together they researched and delved into the heritage of Ethiopian Jewry. The project included a series of meetings held after school hours and led by an educational facilitator. This included lectures as well as field trips in the North and South of Israel that exposed them to the rich culture of the Beta Israel community. Additionally, they attended meetings with inspirational figures on the topic of the Ethiopian Aliyah, and a year-end summary event.

The workshops the students participated in were divided into three main parts:

(a) Learning about the history, culture, and heritage of Ethiopian Jewry, including village life, Aliyah, and absorption into Israel.

(b) Preparation for conducting interviews, including how to formulate questions, listen, write, and record the interview, process the material, as well as write the final draft of the documentary interview.

(c) Processing, including personal reflective writing and preparation of a “pass it on” activity, where students shared their process with their classmates and what the project meant to them.

Throughout the project, in addition to the workshops, students had personal conversations with the educational facilitators, who guided them in building the interview, conducting it, and writing it up.

The project lasted for about eight months during which 76 interviews were conducted, exposing the students and project teams to a variety of inspirational life stories. These stories which were collected, edited, and presented in a documentary book, add unique value to the mosaic of Israeli-Jewish heritage and contribute to its preservation for years to come. The documentary book published in 2023 is the fourth of its kind.

Based on the experiences shared by the students, family members who took part in the process felt great honor and pride in their involvement and cherished the opportunity to share and commemorate their experiences of making Aliyah into Israel. Great anticipation surrounded the publication of the book.

The project also generated interest and anticipation among school staff, some of whom supported it by granting participating students various types of academic credits (e.g. recognizing their participation as a “personal commitment” project/alternative partial evaluation method for their history matriculation grade). In some schools, students shared emotional and academic aspects of their process with their classmates and presented the immigration stories they documented.

1. **Retrospective Evaluation for the 2022-2023 Academic Year**

As part of the summary of activities for the 2022-2023 academic year, a retrospective questionnaire was developed and administered to all the students who participated in the project. The questionnaire was primarily quantitative (closed-ended questions) and related to the project objectives presented above. Additionally, it addressed satisfaction with both the process and the end product, perseverance and completion of the process, ability to work in a team/group, perceptions and attitudes following the project, challenges, and aspects to preserve and improve (open-ended questions). The questionnaire also addressed the students' work methods, as some worked individually, others in pairs, and some in trios, fulfilling different roles in the process such as interviewer/writer/photographer (in the case of video documentation). For students who participated in the project but were not members of the Ethiopian community, a questionnaire was developed focusing on their acquisition of knowledge and exposure to a new culture, as well as their connection to the Ethiopian community and students from that community.

The questionnaire findings are presented in this report.

# Executive Summary

**Methodology**

The research design was retrospective, meaning the questionnaire was administered once at the end of the project and respondents were asked to evaluate the extent of change the project had generated. A total of 114 participants (55%) answered the questionnaire, out of whom 108 were from the Ethiopian community (with a sampling error of ±6.1%). The questionnaire was administered online in September 2023.

The research tool included five outcome categories: intergenerational relationships (for students from the community only), belonging and pride (for students from the community only), writing literacy, self-expression, and social connectedness and belonging, as well as a feedback category (quality and satisfaction with the project). The response scale was: 5 (very great), 4 (great), 3 (mediocre), 2 (slight), and 1 (none at all). The frequencies (number and percentages) of “great” and “very great” responses were calculated for all variables (questions), along with means. The research tool also included three open-ended questions. Items with notable positive changes are highlighted in blue.

**Findings**

* The findings indicate that the project generated positive change across all the measured categories, with significant positive changes observed in the areas of belonging and pride, as well as intergenerational relationships. Female participants reported a slightly greater change in intergenerational relationships compared to male participants.
* A significant positive change was found in the intergenerational relationships category, with 71% of participants reporting a great or very great change. Female participants reported a slightly greater change in the belonging and pride category compared to male participants.
* A significant positive change was found in the belonging and pride category, with 85% of participants reporting a great or very great change.
* A great positive change was found in the writing literacy category (subjective evaluation), with 57% of participants reporting a great or very great change. However, the change was relatively small compared to changes in other areas.
* A positive change was found in the self-expression category (subjective evaluation), with 51% of participants reporting a great or very great change. However, the change was relatively small compared to changes in other areas.
* A positive change was found in the social belonging category, with 65% of participants reporting a great or very great change. Male participants reported a slightly greater change in social connectedness and belonging compared to female participants.
* Satisfaction with the project was high, with 82% of participants reporting great or very great satisfaction. Satisfaction was particularly high with the end product, guidance, as well as the preparation and writing of the interview.
* Photographers reported relatively low satisfaction.
* Content analysis of responses to the open-ended questions revealed that the project’s greatest contribution was in understanding the background and learning about the Ethiopian community and Aliyah, as well as the family story. There was also a significant contribution in terms of strengthening identity and improving learning skills. In terms of areas for improvement, the desire for more hours to be dedicated to the project was particularly salient. Additionally, and to a lesser extent, there was a desire to change the project's structure and make it more interesting.

**Conclusion**

The findings reveal that the project successfully achieved its main goal, which was to raise awareness of the story of the Ethiopian Aliyah and disseminate it through the writing of a documentary book that preserves the heritage of Ethiopian Jewry and commemorates the personal stories of the immigrants from the older generation. The project also successfully achieved its additional objectives, which included:

(a) increasing the sense of belonging and pride among the project participants;

(b) deepening the intergenerational relationship between students and their families by fostering an understanding of the history, culture, and heritage of Ethiopian Jewry; and

(c) improving the students' literacy competence by strengthening their writing skills (however, this objective was achieved to a lesser extent).

# Project Impact and Satisfaction

This section provides an in-depth explanation of the methodology and measurement process and presents the findings pertaining to the project’s impact (the change it generated) and participants’ satisfaction with it.

## Methodology

**Research Design**

The research design was retrospective, meaning the questionnaire was administered once at the end of the project and respondents were asked to evaluate the extent of change they had undergone.

**Sampling**

The findings are based on a sample of 114 students (55%) from 18 different schools who participated in the TIUD Project. Of the participants, 108 were members of the Ethiopian community and six were not.

The sampling error for the final population of 206 participants with a maximal variation (50:50) and a confidence level of 95% is ±6.1%.

#### Table 1: Gender and Country of Origin

#### Table 2: Schools

#### Table 3: Role in the Project and Number of Students on the Team

**Research Tool**

The research tool included five outcome categories, as detailed below, as well as a feedback component.

Good internal consistency was found across all categories, as indicated in parentheses.

* **Intergenerational relationships (α=0.91)** – For students from the Ethiopian community only.

This category comprised questions about familiarity with their background, story and heritage, their relationship with their family, as well as their ability to tell others about their culture and heritage.

* **Belonging and pride (α=0.86)** - For students from the Ethiopian community only.

This category included questions about their sense of pride in their family and community, their sense of connection and belonging, in addition to their willingness to tell others about their culture and heritage.

* **Writing literacy (α=0.78)**

This category consisted of two self-report questions on improvement in writing and written expression skills.

* **Self-confidence (α=0.83)**

This category encompassed two self-report questions on improvement in confidence to express themselves in class as well as share their emotions and feelings.

* **Social connectedness and belonging (α=0.92)**

This category included questions about making new friends, strengthening friendships, openness to different opinions, feeling accepted, willingness to participate in activities and social involvement, as well as a sense of connection to the school.

* **Feedback (quality and overall satisfaction with the project) (α=0.93)**

This section included questions about interest, organization and clarity, the quality of guidance, as well as overall satisfaction with the various activities (workshops, peak days, preparation and writing of the interview, and the end product).

**Response scale:** 5-Very great, 4-Great, 3-Mediocre, 2-Slight, 1-None at all

The research tool also included three open-ended questions concerning what the participants had gained from the project, aspects they felt should be changed or improved, and topics that were not covered in the questionnaire that they wished to raise.

**Process**

The research tool was administered in September 2023 in the form of an online questionnaire.

**Statistical Analyses**

The frequencies (number and percentages) of “great” and “very great” responses were calculated for all variables (questions), along with means.

Items with significant positive changes are highlighted in blue.

**Research Limitations**

* Non-probability sampling.
* Retrospective measurement only.

## Findings

### Impact Overview

* Positive change was found across all measured categories.
* Significant positive change was found in the categories of belonging and pride as well as intergenerational relationships.
* The graph below provides a visual representation of the findings appearing in the table, ranked from the category with the greatest change to the category with the smallest change.

#### Table 4: Impact Overview

### Intergenerational Relationships

* A significant positive change was found in the category of intergenerational relationships, with 71% of participants reporting a great or very great change.
* Positive change was found across all items in this category.
* Significant positive change was found in items related to familiarity with their background and learning new things about their community.
* Girls reported slightly greater change in this category compared to boys.
* No differences were found with regard to the number of team members or specific roles.

#### Table 5: Intergenerational Relationships

#### Table 6: Intergenerational Relationships, Segmentation by Gender

#### Table 7: Intergenerational Relationships, Segmentation by Number of Team Members

#### Table 8: Intergenerational Relationships, Segmentation by Role

### Belonging and Pride

* A significant positive change was found in the category of belonging and pride, with 85% of participants reporting a great to very great change.
* A significant positive change was found across all the items in this category.
* Girls reported a slightly greater change in this category compared to boys.
* No differences were found concerning the number of team members or specific roles.

#### Table 9: Belonging and Pride

#### Table 10: Belonging and Pride, Segmentation by Gender

#### Table 11: Belonging and Pride, Segmentation by Number of Team Members

#### Table 12: Belonging and Pride, Segmentation by Role

### Writing Literacy

* A positive change was found in the category of writing literacy, with 57% of participants reporting a great or very great change.
* However, the positive change in this category was relatively small compared to changes in other areas.
* Boys reported a slightly greater change in this category compared to girls. However, this difference likely stems from their roles rather than gender.
* Writers and interviewers reported a significant change in writing literacy compared to photographers.
* No differences were found regarding the number of team members.

#### Table 13: Writing Literacy

#### Table 14: Writing Literacy, Segmentation by Gender

#### Table 15: Writing Literacy, Segmentation by Number of Team Members

#### Table 16: Writing Literacy, Segmentation by Role

### Self-Expression

* A positive change was found in the category of self-expression, with 51% of participants reporting a great to very great change.
* However, the positive change in this category was relatively small compared to changes in other areas.
* Teams of three students reported a slightly greater change in the area of self-expression compared to teams of two or students who worked alone. However, this likely stemmed from the students’ baseline differences rather than team size.
* No differences were found between genders and roles in this category.

#### Table 17: Self-Expression

#### Table 18: Self-Expression, Segmentation by Gender

#### Table 19: Self-Expression, Segmentation by Number of Team Members

#### Table 20: Self-Expression, Segmentation by Role

### Social Connectedness and Belonging

* A positive change was found in the category of social belonging, with 65% of participants reporting a great to very great change.
* A positive change was found across all items pertaining to social belonging.
* A significant positive change was found in the item, "I am more open to listening and accepting different and diverse opinions."
* Boys reported a slightly greater change in this category compared to girls.
* No differences were found regarding the number of team members and specific roles.

#### Table 21: Social Connectedness and Belonging

#### Table 22: Social Connectedness and Belonging, Segmentation by Gender

#### Table 23: Social Connectedness and Belonging, Segmentation by Number of Team Members

#### Table 24: Social Connectedness and Belonging, Segmentation by Role

### Satisfaction with the Project

* A high level of satisfaction with the project was found, with 82% of participants reporting great or very great satisfaction.
* Particularly high satisfaction was found in reference to the items related to the preparation and writing of the interview, the guidance, and the end product.
* Photographers reported relatively low satisfaction.

#### Table 25: Feedback

#### Table 26: Feedback, Segmentation by Gender

#### Table 27: Feedback, Segmentation by Number of Team Members

#### Table 28: Feedback, Segmentation by Role

### Content Analysis: Answers to the Open-Ended Questions

The questionnaire included three open-ended questions, for which content analysis was performed. The analysis involved clustering responses into themes, presenting prominent responses within each theme, and indicating the frequency of responses (the number of respondents who mentioned a theme and the percentage of respondents out of the total respondents to the open-ended questions). The themes are presented in descending order, from the most frequently mentioned theme to the least mentioned theme.

The content analysis indicates that the project made its most significant impact by expanding the participants’ understanding and knowledge about the Ethiopian community's background, Aliya, and their family stories. It also significantly contributed to strengthening their sense of identity and improving their learning skills.

**Benefits participants gained from the project:**

* Background and knowledge about the Ethiopian Aliyah, the community, and the family story: 37 (44%)

"I heard very, very interesting personal stories that I'm very happy I heard."
"I discovered many things I didn’t know about my amazing community!"
"I learned a lot about my community’s history."
"I learned about my homeland and where I came from."

* Strengthening their sense of personal identity and pride in their family as well as in their community: 10 (12%)

"I became prouder of my community."
"I’m proud of my parents."
"My identity."

* Improved learning skills: 10 (12%)

"The project helped me do better in Hebrew class."
"It helped me do better in school."
"It helped me with my Hebrew."

* Treatment and assistance from the school staff: 9 (11%)

"A teacher who’s a friend and is helping me this year too."
"The teacher supported me."
"The treatment from the teachers."

* The social aspect (expanding their circle of friends, social gatherings, teamwork, etc.): 7 (8%)

"I made a lot of new friends, from my own school and all over the country."
"New friends."

* Personal and ethical development: 7 (8%)

"I learned to listen and respect people who are different from me."
"Public speaking skills."
"Being goal-oriented."

* Activities, workshops, and field trips: 7 (8%)

"The workshops were interesting."
"Fun activities."

* Other

"To be honest, at first I wasn't interested at all. But as I became more serious my curiosity grew."

**Areas for change and improvement:**

The content analysis indicates that the participants would have liked more hours to be dedicated to the project.

* More hours, more meetings: 11 (19%)

“The project should start as soon as the school year does (in September).”

“More hours for the project”

“More meetings”

* Changing the method and learning approach: 7 (12%)

"Learning more stories and delving deeper into those stories, and maybe getting an older immigrant to share their experience."
"Including more personal interviews in the lecture."
"Make it more interesting."
"Technology."

* A Need for more social and experiential activities: 4 (7%)

"More social and creative activities."
"Projects involving artwork, etc."

* Need for nourishment: 3 (5%)

"Food after school hours."

* Other

"Every staff member from every school should be aware of what they need to convey to the younger generation, and they should be members of the community."
"Have a lecture on the topic for all the students in the school."
"Not to photograph me."

**Other issues not covered in the questionnaire that participants wished to express:**

* The project contributed to them both personally and socially: 3

"The TIUD Project brought us closer together."
"I want to participate more, to do things, to help, to contribute."

* Praise and gratitude for the project: 3

"It’s an amazing project. Thank you so much for the privilege."
"It was good and interesting."

* A desire to expand the project (to include the entire class or continue the project with the current participants).

"The whole class should be required to learn about the Ethiopian community, like I learn about the Holocaust."
"I’d like it to continue this year, too."

1. Ethiopian National Project (ENP) - School Performance and Community Empowerment (SPACE). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)